

STAFF REPORT

TO: Planning & Economic Development Committee **DATE:** 3/11/09
FROM: Stephanie Monson, Planner
SUBJECT: Application for EPA Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program

Summary

The Office of Economic Development proposes that the City of Asheville apply for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smart Growth Implementation Assistance Program for the following project:

East Meets West – Reconnecting our Neighborhoods: A strategy for sustainable growth that will support repairing and protecting Asheville's natural, cultural and economic resources.

Background

The EPA has issued a call for proposals via their annual Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) Program. An attachment is included explaining the program and its requirements. The City of Asheville, as a local governmental agency, would be eligible to apply and compete with other applications from other cities across the country.

Project Description

The City of Asheville and its partners will ask for technical assistance in exploring policy options that maintain the community's vehicular mobility via the I-240 and 19/23 interchange and, at the same time, foster neighborhood revitalization via infill development focused on mixed uses, multimodal transportation and the inclusion of affordable and accessible housing. This policy analysis will address the problems that Asheville's I-240 and 19/23 interchanges have effectively created:

- Disconnected neighborhoods;
- Unwalkable, unsafe, dead end streets;
- Accelerated community abandonment of the Chicken Hill and River District Neighborhoods;
- Impediments to stormwater management;
- Barriers to pedestrian and bicycle traffic; and
- Sprawling, suburban development patterns around the city's urban core, including a public housing site separated physically, socially, and culturally from a thriving downtown less than half a mile away.

The project analysis will be guided by the community goal of integrating transportation and land use as an economic development vehicle by spurring harmonious, community based, multi-modal re-development. It is anticipated that the focus areas will be the French Broad River area, the West End Clingman Avenue Neighborhood and the Asheville Housing Authority's Hillcrest site. In addition to the characteristics of these areas, the relationship/connection with downtown and each other will also be the subject of some analysis

The City would be the primary applicant for this proposal but will work closely with the Asheville Design Center and the Asheville Housing Authority as co-applicants. Other community stakeholders could include: WECAN Neighborhood Association; Mountain Housing Opportunities; the River Arts District Association; Riverlink; the Clean Air Community Trust Fund; Land of Sky Regional Council; and the Western North Carolina Alliance.

Financial Impact/Resources:

Successful applicants for the SGIA program would be required to provide equivalent in-kind services during the contract team visit, and resources must be dedicated to analysis implementation (post visit). Estimates of City of Asheville in-kind assistance include:

- Pre-award: 6 hours
- Contract team visit: 25 hours
- Post- award hours:
 - First month after visit (assistance with report preparation): 20 hours
 - First quarter after report (Council consideration of any resulting recommendations): 25 hours.

Long term resource dedication cannot be estimated at this time. There is no financial contribution by the City other than the in-kind resources listed above.

Goal Alignment:

From City Council's adopted 2008-09 Strategic Plan, the two goals most directly addressed are:

- Promote sustainable, high density infill growth that makes efficient use of existing resources.
- Ensure financial accountability by matching resources with strategic initiatives.

Other opportunities and goals that could be realized in conjunction with, or stimulated by this initiative:

- Increase supply of affordable housing;
- Support diversified job growth;
- Partnering with the Asheville Housing Authority redevelopment of public housing;
- Integrating public housing with the surrounding community;
- Support efforts to reduce carbon emissions;
- Promote emissions reducing transportation options;
- Prioritize infrastructure investments that support children's health and safety; and, develop plans with citizen participation.

Other items of note:

Council endorsed Alternate 4B at their regular meeting on October 14, 2008.

The proposed timeline is as follows:

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| 3/11/09: | Selected proposal reviewed by Planning and Economic Development Committee of City Council. |
| 3/24 or 4/7/09: | Proposal reviewed at regular City Council meeting |
| 4/23/09: | Proposal due to EPA office by 5:00 p.m. |